

Thai News Update: 5 April 2021

1. Hoping for a miracle

Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))

The long-awaited reopening to foreign tourists is likely to take shape in July, led by Phuket as the pilot area for a tourism sandbox -- the first initiative to remove mandatory quarantine from entry requirements. The Andaman beaches once bustling with foreigners have been left deserted for over a year, able to draw a limited number of local guests who prefer a short-distance trip rather than roaming too far from home. Phuket's tourism income of 442 billion baht in 2019 evaporated to 108 billion last year because of the pandemic, with 98.8 billion of that total coming from the first two months before the nationwide lockdown.

2. Blue bonds studied to help oceans

Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))

The Public Debt Management Office (PDMO) is studying the feasibility of issuing "blue bonds", with proceeds going to support ocean and marine resources as well as the sustainable development of Thailand's seas, which serve as a massive tourism draw. Patricia Mongkhonvanit, director-general of PDMO, said blue bonds are part of a sustainable development effort in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Previously PDMO issued green bonds, social bonds and sustainability bonds to achieve sustainable development goals. A blue bond is a debt security issued to raise capital to finance the implementation of SDGs related to the ocean, the seas and marine resources as well as a transition towards a sustainable ocean economy.

3. Thailand to explore travel bubble with Singapore

Source: The Nation ([Link](#))

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports aims to discuss with Singapore a travel bubble between the two countries. Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said that the discussions would take place within this week with the Embassy of Singapore. "We have acknowledged that Singapore has previously run the travel bubble with Australia and New Zealand. If Singapore agrees to run the scheme with Thailand as well, we would probably be able to receive tourists from Australia and New Zealand, in addition to Singaporeans," the minister said.

4. 800,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine to be delivered to provinces in April: PM

Source: The Nation ([Link](#))

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said on 3 April that 800,000 doses of Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine would be delivered to provinces nationwide this month. Of the total, he said 300,000 doses would be used to contain the spread of Covid-19 in six provinces, another 300,000 doses would be used to help tourism recover and in border provinces, and 200,000 doses would be delivered to 55 provinces." We have urged government agencies to use an application to facilitate registration for the Covid-19 vaccine jab," he said. He said the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had so far approved three Covid-19 vaccines: AstraZeneca, Sinovac, and Johnson and Johnson.

5. First foreign tourists in over a year arrive in Phuket

Source: Thai PBS World ([Link](#))

A group of foreign tourists, mostly German, arrived on Thailand's popular resort island of Phuket on 3 April. They are the first in more than a year. They are here under the "Sandbox" travel bubble program, which is aimed at gradually reopening Thailand to foreign arrivals as the COVID-19 situation improves. The visitors flew from Frankfurt on scheduled Thai Airways International flights. THAI's sales director, Jesada Chanterama, said that most of the German tourists landed at Suvarnabhumi international airport, with rest landing in Phuket. Under the first phase of the Sandbox travel program, the arriving passengers must show a certificate, indicating that they have been inoculated against COVID-19, and will be required to quarantine, at their own expense, at their hotels for seven days, after which they can venture out, with their whereabouts being electronically tracked.

6. Court to mull CP-Tesco merger

Source: Bangkok Post ([Link](#))

The Administrative Court has agreed to consider a petition lodged by a group of consumer watchdogs over the Trade Competition Commission's (TCC) decision to approve the merger of CP Retail Development Co and Tesco Stores (Thailand) Ltd. Led by the Foundation for Consumers, the network of 37 consumer advocacy groups filed the petition on March 14, urging the court to issue an injunction to prevent possible negative impacts on consumers. On March 22, the court decided to take up the case and asked the petitioners to submit a written explanation as to why an injunction is necessary, along with evidence to support the claim.